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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

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Foreword

The theme requested for: Popular Participation in the Process of Development in Africa, is extremely vast. Hence, we have opted for known aspects and facts. As a result of our contacts and readings, it will be better to develop the theme in reference from studies of significant and specific cases in Portuguese-, French- and English-speaking Africa.

1. Concept of participation and its evolution in time

Popular participation in development, in its widest sense, its organization and implementation, can not be dissociated from the society. It takes place in given political, social and economic contexts and it is also closely linked to the various development models or concepts. Thus, an approach to participation must not be dissociated from the issue of development of present-day Africa.

For a better understanding of the concept we have taken, systematically, two aspects corresponding to two key periods in the socio-economic development of the continent, namely:

(a) The 1960s, marked by the independence of a large number of African countries. Since this period, and over the last 20 years, participation has been seen as an instrument for implementating official policies. Therefore, it concerns, fundamentally, a strategy for involving people, especially rural people, in the implementation of great national projects through the provision of voluntary labour in the setting up of infrastructures and in the development of projects. In this context, participation is seen as a necessary input for the implementation of projects with cheap labour, otherwise known as human investment.

This is the result of the concept developed on the basis of State functions and the organization of socio-economic activities. This all-embracing and great concept could hardly view participation as an effective means of making the African civil society participate in development efforts, thereby creating instruments and conditions for autonomous decision.

(b) The 1970s when, the second concept emanated, basically, as a consequence of the failures of the development policies adopted, policies which were and are responsible for the deterioration, inter alia, of the living conditions of the popular masses their "proletarization", the massive rural exodus, and food insufficiency. In the Sahelian region, the great droughts of 1970 to 1974 and the ecological deterioration allowed for a reactivation of development at the local and regional levels and for the establishment of autonomous rural organizations.

As a matter of fact, the budding concept is in disagreement with the first one, which is mainly utilitarian. Hence, in the implementation of State projects, participation takes the form of a process through which the people implement their projects, thereby establishing for themselves organizations and/or self-managed activities. Underlying this concept is the idea of responsibility, organization, autonomy, self-management and power.

The basic element of this concept is power. In fact, participation associated with structural transformation or with the redistribution of basic commodities requires the possession of authority, which is indispensable for an effective participation of the people. Therefore, the concept of participation such as the formation of power, constitutes a radical break with the traditional definitions adopted a long time ago.

Although researches on the problematics of power-focused participation are still at the developing stage. they have allowed for the definition of the following three major elements:

(a) The identification and organization of distinct socio-economic groups in the form of grass-roots social units;

(b) The process of informal education and of awareness: and

(c) The need for external aid, indispensable for power development and follow-up.

In conclusion, it can be summarized that participation is both a means and an end. Given the diversity of situations and participation in development, the context in which participation takes place and the underlying critical and philosophical concepts, the various attempts to formally define participation which are far from the universal concepts, reflect a great diversity both practically and conceptually. However, there is a positive development in the characteristic element of a new way of approaching popular participation with a view to enhancing the people's economic and social self-promotion. These elements concern the involvement of the people in all aspects of action organization and implementation, namely planning, implementation, management follow-up and assessment.

However, the fact is that it is practically impossible, today, to dissociate participation from the complex problem of development and from the political organization of society. However, in a wider sense, participation as a process of social transformation must positively influence the very essence of development.

2. Structures and implementation

2.1 Co-operatives

The co-operative organizations in most African countries, modelled after the Western ones, were organized as instruments for implementing official macro-economic projects. Above all, they serve as support programmes for the introduction of such modern agricultural factors as soil fertilization, fight against diseases and pests and soil utilization as well as the promotion of cash crops meant for export, to the detriment of subsistence crops.

Only very few co-operatives functioned as true instruments of self-promotion in the rural world during the 1970s. The role of the public authorities went beyond the mere establishment of activities, as such activities were directly carried out by State functionaries assigned to do so. In fact, the co-operatives were an extension of public enterprises or of autonomous State services.

The development of new systems of association in Africa was the result of the failure of the types of co-operatives that were previously introduced into the continent and how they were introduced. This change is not one of mere words but, indeed, was substantive, for the fact that associations now had a new perspective in terms of

objectives, structure and modus operandi. This new thrust was mainly inspired by the traditional forms of solidarity and mutual assistance and by the needs and priorities of the people.

Thus, various forms of specialized, multifaceted and territorial co-operatives have emerged. It will be boring to start citing the various types of co-operatives existing in the African continent.

In spite of the difficulties faced, co-operatives have played and still play an extremely important role in the provision of facilities to the low- and medium-income groups, both in the rural and urban centres (consumer co-operatives, village boutiques, and grain banks, etc.); in the provision of agricultural and animal production inputs linked to the cottage industry, service industries, co-operatives and associations; in the abundance of products from commercial co-operatives; in mobilizing local savings associations such as tontines, savings and credit banks and associations; in the provision of mutual social welfare and security; and in the development of human resources through educational and training associations and co-operatives. In 1988, a total of 116,443 co-operative organizations with about 36,548,530 members were enumerated, in 46 African countries.

The co-operative sector is gradually being considered as a structural element of development policies in Africa. In certain African countries, it is considered, constitutionally, as a kind of property, that is a specific sector of the economy; this is the case with Cape Verde. Although very different, the status conferred on the sector gives it an indispensable role to play in development both locally and regionally.

2.2 Community development

Community development is another development strategy or philosophy used in Africa. In the United Republic of Tanzania, where it is practised as village Ujamaas, community development is one of the fundamental elements of the socialist orientation of the economy. The same type of approach was used in Mozambique in the early days of independence. In Guinea-Bissau, during the liberation struggle, free zones were created in the form of local government. In French-speaking Africa, the local development associations were a renewed expression of community development.

Also, in the Anglo-Saxon world, community development was more widespread in the African English-speaking countries.

In the African French- and Portuguese-speaking countries, community development did not take the form of autonomous development due to the introduction of class structures and due to its dependence on State social structure; whereas in the African English-speaking countries, apart from the problems faced mainly at the socio-political level, community development programmes were more widespread.

In short, community development based on the community nature of the existing social structures in the rural African societies would have emerged as a way of enabling the local people to control and manage their own development among a complexity of problems affecting their community life within a given territorial context. On the other hand, community development also constitutes, in a way, an alternative model to the

traditional forms of co-operation, for the fact that it enhances and integrates the various traditional forms of co-operation within the local dynamics of development. One important example is the case of traditional groups (NAM) in Yatenga, Burkina Faso, supported by the association known as "SIX'S".

Certain studies conducted have shown that community participation has been positive in such areas of development as health, drinking water supply, soil restoration and conservation, provision of production infrastructures and of social and educational facilities.

Today, the main emphasis is on community management of the environment. In the Sahel, efforts are being made to find appropriate ways of enabling the people to control and manage their land. Each day, there is an increasing awareness of the fact that poverty is closely linked with the environment.

For example, CILSS in its new approach to the struggle against desertification and to protect the environment, which is a global approach, underlines the need for a greater control of local development under the micro regions as well as for a continuous sharing of responsibility between the local communities. Community development in the form of local development is expressed politically (decentralization), legally (recognition of local communities as a collective entity), in land use (solving of agricultural problems in the promotion of a more equitable access to land), approach-wise (discarding of former approaches for sectoral projects and for increasing development at the level of the villages and the local collectivities, with a view to meeting the overall needs of the people).

2.3 Self-help and development

The search for new forms of development in Africa is responsible for the emergence of local development structures rather known as local NGOs. Recent trends have shown that the local NGOs have been created to enable the African civil society to better resolve the current development problems and revelations which the State cannot solve. These NGOs, mostly supported by their European and American brothers, function as intermediate support structures to local development.

Apart from their assistance to the local and grass-roots participation structures, the local NGOs constitute an important instrument for mobilizing African technicians and executives for the struggle for a development capable of meeting the basic needs of the people, since the people are the major actors in this development process.

The local NGOs play a very important role in stimulating rural organizations. Their importance was mostly felt, inter alia, during the 1972-1984 drought, in war times and in environmental programmes. Apparently, it is generally agreed that participation of local associations in development is an absolute necessity in Africa.

3. Mobilization of resources

The financing of development activities based on popular participation is also from mobilized local resources in the form of labour contribution, material support and the

individual contributions of the communities and/or associations organized by the people. The highest forms of savings are the tontines and the savings and credit co-operatives. The collective camp is one of the major sources of collective self-investment. Citing only the examples of Cameroon, Mali, Rwanda and Kenya would suffice. However, it should be emphasized that most of the local development projects and actions are financed from external aid, especially the NGOs. For example, in 1986, in Cape Verde, about 22 per cent of aid from non-governmental sources was consumed by the co-operative sector.

If, on the one hand, assistance to projects continues to be needed on the other, it needs to be adequate both at the planning and implementation levels. There is a need to move from the stage of the small-scale isolated projects or from the financing of immediate action to local and sectoral programmes with a view and to creating a new local development dynamics.

This also means that popular participation in the process of development in Africa would be in the context of dependent and underdeveloped economics of development, thereby making the participative process more complex and contradictory. For example, how can one speak of autonomy of action and of operation of the local organizations when the implementation of their projects depend largely on external aid? Without misgivings, this is a contradiction that must be rectified given the fact that the principle of autonomy constitutes the essence of local social development.

4. Areas and activities

Popular participation in Africa involves the various sectors of socio-economic activities, which are numerous and very diversified. Participation activities are methodologically and simplistically listed as follows:

4.1 Rehabilitation and protection of the environment

Owing to the continued drought especially in the Sahel, soil degradation, internal migration putting greater pressure on land, deficiency of technical production systems, participation in the restoration of the ecological equilibrium is one of the major aspects of popular participation. Daily, the relationship between environment and poverty, environment and development, is a proof of the need for a greater involvement of the people, as the social actor, in the management of the environment.

Participation in this area implies, inter alia, the following activities:

(a) Soil and water conservation: afforestation through groups, associations, co-operatives and communities. This participation involves tree planting, maintenance and utilization and production of plants through nurseries set up by communities and associations.

The mechanical component of participation almost always involves the construction of dams, dikes, banquettes, barriers, reservoirs and similar projects. Normally, small water projects are carried out by the people. In most cases, the needed resources are mobilized directly through associations at the grass-roots level, self-help local organizations and State services in charge of liaison with the NGOs.

(b) Agro-silvo-pastoral production: the soil and water conservation exercise also aims at increasing the production and performance of the people. Hence, the exploitation of forest areas marked out for the State, communities and associations has allowed for increasing animal, fire wood and coal production in many African countries resulting in an additional source of revenue.

4.2 Introduction of goods and services

The participation also covers all stages of production in various fields of activities. The following are among the various forms of production organizations: groups, co-operatives, associations and collective community camps, in agriculture, horticulture and fruit production, examples of such productions are widespread in Africa, but in terms of fruit production the case of Guinea-Bissau fruit co-operative can be singled out as one of the major producers and exporters of fruits; for fish production, the Ghanaian co-operative movement can be cited; for the cottage industry, this exists every where; for industry, the network of urban co-operatives in Guinea-Bissau and the industrial ventures in Cape Verde are evident for carpentry, masonry, civil engineering and bakery; and for animal production, the case of the union of animal producers of Mali is illustrative.

In the area of services, participation is also active in Africa. For example, in Cape Verde, the network of consumer retail co-operatives regularly provide consumer goods for an estimated 18,000 families at low prices, which corresponds to 27 per cent of the resident population. Other types of distribution associations are all over the continent, namely village boutiques, cereal banks and consumer co-operatives. The provision of production inputs is also done by co-operatives and associations - the examples here are local multi-functional co-operatives and associations. As for marketing, the marketing co-operatives play an important role. Given the failure of co-operatives specialized in the marketing of such products as cotton, cocoa, and groundnut in various African countries, autonomous markets were created which enabled producers to better control products meant for sale.

A very important aspect of self-organized services is savings and credit. Here, it will be enough to cite the examples of Rwanda (people's banks), Togo (the savings and credit co-operative movement), Cameroon (the tontines and other forms of savings and credit associations), Cote d'Ivoire (the rural savings and credit banks known as CREP). The above provide services which sometimes go beyond the limits of their originally intended sphere, as was the case of the people's bank in Rwanda. There is an increase in the importance of popular credit mobilization, considering that African banks do not finance self-promotion activities at the grass-roots level. The small-scale rural producers hardly have access to the traditional credit institutions. The people's savings and credit associations provide financing for most family, group and community activities.

There is also participation in the collective utilization and management of production equipment and infrastructures.

4.3 Satisfaction of basic needs

In this area, it will be necessary to underline the major role played by the grass-roots communities and associations in the area of health, such as primary health care, organization and management of village pharmacies, development of traditional medicine and management of primary health units. The participation also involves the setting up of such installations as primary health units and health centres.

Drinking water supply, as a priority among major activities, is one of the areas that mostly involve the people given the difficult water situation, especially in the Sahel. Here, participation involves water fetching, storage and distribution.

4.4 Solidarity and mutual assistance in emergency situations

The communities and most especially intermediary associations, that is, the local NGOs have contributed significantly in the provision of food, clothing and medication to people displaced as a result of war, drought, hunger and other calamities. The cases of Mozambique, Angola and the Sudan, among others, readily come to mind.

4.5 Development of local resources

The various participation activities in this area are, above all, examples of development of local human resources through education. Furthermore, the development of local skills and professional training by the local participation structures are proof of the role of participation in intellectual development. It will be difficult to imagine popular participation in development without the development of human resources.

Development of human resources is closely linked to development of material and financial resources. Here, participation is through such participatory structures as the tontines, savings and credit banks, mutual social welfare and security, as well as through community contributions, and material and labour supply. This widespread practice of self-financing or local sharing results from the principle that participation must, first, be inspired by a local effort and a collective will to undertake actions.

5. Analogy of popular participation in Africa

Owing to the economic and social crisis in practically all African countries, these countries are now implementing structural adjustment programmes. The social consequences, namely decline of purchasing power and living conditions of the people is a proof of the need for a more appropriate identification of the current problematics of popular participation.

The problem is so preoccupying that it features in structural adjustment programmes and is described in the following terms:

> "The creation of rural institutions to encourage family and small-scale industries based on local technology, internal financing, development of rural infrastructures and participation of women; it also involves the making of specific legislations on the share and participation of the various socio-economic groups, such as the rural co-operatives, the artisans and the traders".

Apart from the points mentioned above, popular participation structures will be facing an unfavourable situation with regard to access to resources and to aid.

Therefore, under the present condition, it will be an illusion to speak of an effective popular participation based on internal financing, simply because the ability of self-financing is limited and may worsen in the future.

However, popular participation in development presupposes, inter alia, the following priorities:

(a) Strengthening and/or establishment of dynamic participation structures in order to encourage the emergence of an active and responsible civil society;

(b) Development of productive activities aimed at improving the performance and conditions of living of the people;

(c) Execution of actions aimed at satisfying such needs as drinking water supply, primary health care, literacy programmes and education;

(d) Fight against desertification, and environmental protection;

(e) Intensifying sensitization of the people so as to enable them to make greater use of their potential and to benefit more from their own system;

(f) Strengthening co-operation among grass-roots organizations with a view to creating a rural-focused network and movement;

(g) Professional and technical training within the associations and development programmes, aimed at enhancing technical, technological and organizational skills;

(h) Strengthening and/or creating self-help structures in favour of local development with a view to ensuring the necessary technical assistance, advisory services and training as well as the mobilization of additional resources, within the rural areas.

6. Conclusions

The first and major conclusion is summarized as follows:

(a) Participation is not a linear process as its forms of organization, types of activities, political and institutional contexts, are greatly diversified. Depending on the political context, the concept of participation and the social conditions in which it is carried out vary from country to country and from region to region;

(b) The efforts of the local people through spontaneous participation and modern structures, such as the local development co-operatives and associations, are becoming increasingly more important in Africa, both in production, in environmental protection and in improving the quality of life of the rural and urban populations. The impact of these efforts is increasing at the local and regional levels;

(c) From these two observations participation involves the following two fundamental dimensions:

(i) Education: this concerns, basically, the stimulation of a critical consciousness in the people with regard to their own situation and the context in which they live;

(ii) Policy: here, the aim is social transformation, that is, societal democratization through the expansion of social property and the redistribution of power and resources.

The second conclusion concerns the participative process itself. In fact, the participation intensity, its social scope, level of physical implementation, all of which depend on a combination of internal and external factors among which the individual and collective culture of the actors, the types of problems to resolve, the approach, the dimension of activities, the technological and organizational levels, the short-term impact, the stance of the public authorities and political organizations with regard to the autonomous structures of the population.

This complexity and heterogeneity of the participative process underlines the need to define criteria and indicators for assessing participation. This would require a methodological or scientific approach which would be very important for enhancing and implementing the concept of participation.

In this respect, some progress have been made. Almost all studies so far conducted have emphasized that an effective participation can only be possible if it actively involves the beneficiaries in the following phases of development actions: identification, planning, execution, follow-up and assessment.

On the other hand, recent researches have given us possible assessment indicators in each of the phases. Over and above formal definitions, there is a need for planning and for testing instruments. This would enable us to evaluate the effectiveness and forms of participation and the impact of activities undertaken.

Popular participation in development is not just a slogan, but an indispensable requirement for the current development of African societies and economies.

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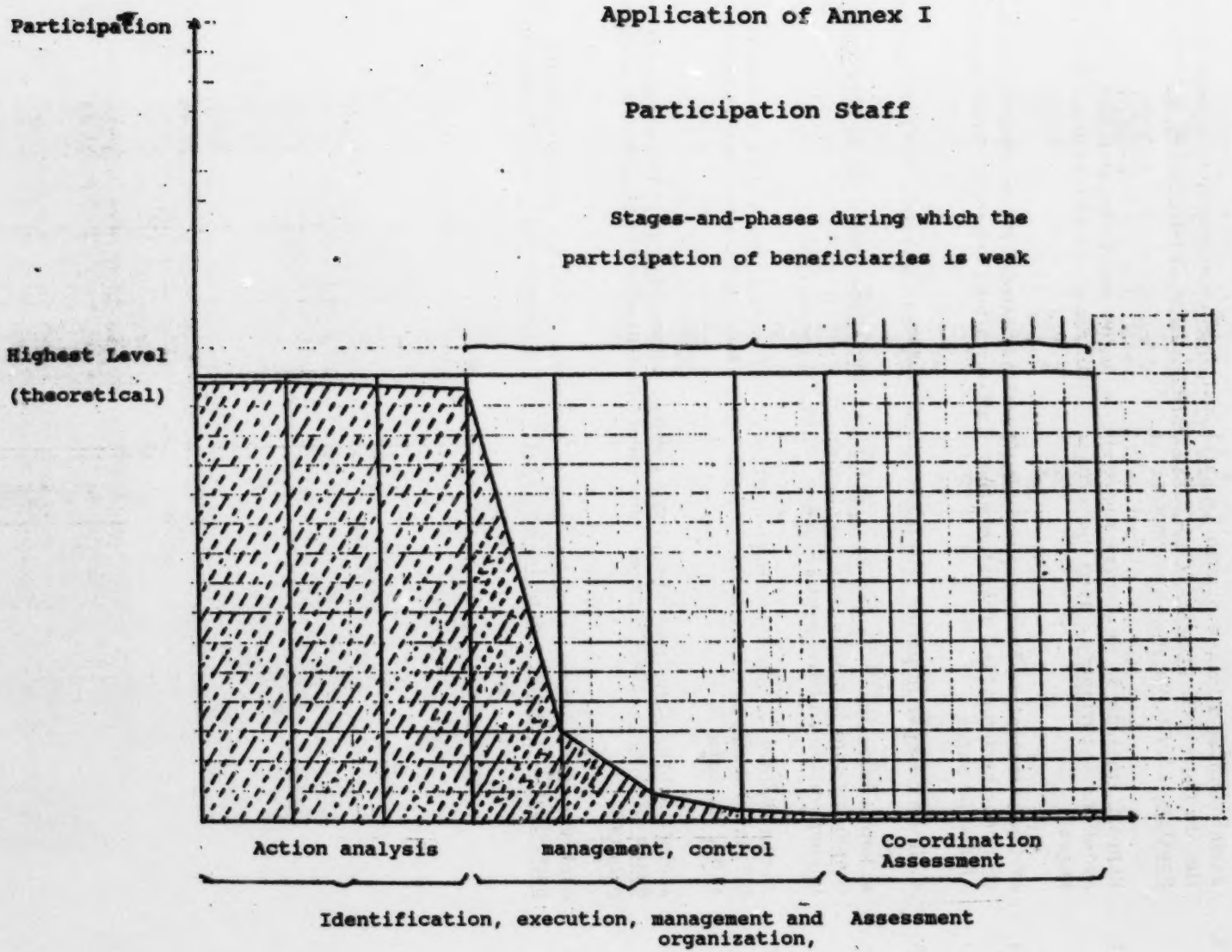
Application of Annex I

Participation Staff



SCALE OF ANALYSIS OF THE LEVEL OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Actors	Planning power					Financial power								Executing Power				
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
National support structures to development																		
Foreign aid to development																		
Village development organizations																		

Determinant role in the overall project

Determinant role with regard to an area of activity or a project locality.

Linked with the activity and/or decision-making

Where are the powers?

CHAPTER III

SCALE OF ANALYSIS

Planning power

1. Who takes the initiative? One or several institutions or individuals. This initiative can be through contacts aimed at the implementation of a new activity or through a demand for assistance for an action being executed.

2. Who leads? Leading can be by one or several institutions or groups of people playing a major role at all stages of the project.

3. Who expresses? One or several institutions or groups of people expressing a need or a demand for action, spontaneous or induced.

4. Who analyses? One or several institutions or groups of people who review requests made by the people concerned, be they specific classes of people in a community or institutions responsible for analyzing the situation in the area in question.

5. Who prepares? One or several institutions or groups of people processing data and compiling an initial project file (formalization of objectives, programme of activity, time-table and budget).

Financial power

6. Who searches? One or several institutions or groups of people who contact the potential sources of financing at the local, national and international levels, usually outside the area in which the project is located.

7. Who offers? One or several institutions or groups of people ready to finance all or part of the project, on the basis of an agreement of principle.

8. Who negotiates? One or several institutions or groups of people participating in the definition of the modes of financing and committing themselves by signing financing contracts.

9. Who engages? One or several institutions or group of people concerned who release and provide funds, equipment or technical assistance.

10. Who sets up? One or several institutions responsible for setting up the mechanism for the circulation and control of funds.

11. Who manages? One or several institutions or groups of people who control the mobilization of funds, equipment and material in the form of loans and grants.

12. Who controls? One or several institutions who examine the utilization of funds and equipment by means of budgetary and accounting control.

13. Who justifies? One or several institutions or groups concerned who justify the expenses made by the financiers and their subsequent follow-up.

Implementation power

14. Who programmes? One or several institutions or groups concerned who programme the physical and financial execution of the project activities.

Where are the powers?

15. Who executes? One or several institutions or groups concerned who physically implement the project.

16. Who co-ordinates? One or several institutions responsible for contacting, mobilizing and controlling the other actors outside the community in question; this co-ordination involves follow-up of the project.

17. Who evaluates? One or several institutions who defined the type of evaluation and the respective indicators. These co-ordinate, implement and lead the evaluation process.

18. Who trains? One or several institutions directly engaged in training and/or in planning training activities.